

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The foregoing amendments and these remarks are responsive to the Office Action dated February 13, 2004. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and these remarks.

The applicant respectfully disagrees with all of the rejections presented by the Office Action. Nonetheless, and in an effort to expedite prosecution, each of the previously pending independent claims has been amended to recite that the plastic is biaxially stretched, and support for these amendments can be found at page 9, lines 2 to 7, of the specification. Also, the removal of "by removal of means" from claim 7, line 2, is for purposes of clarification. In addition, claims 29-36 have been added. The two new independent claims 31 and 35 indicate that the plastics film undergoes a further or secondary stretch beyond the yield point of the film to further extend its length and decrease its thickness. Support for this can be found in the specification from page 13, line 16, to the end of the description on page 14.

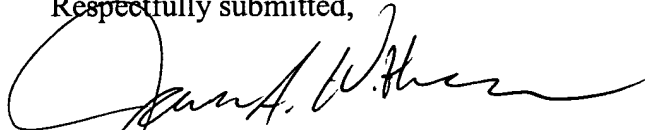
It is respectfully submitted that none of the prior art documents singly or together teach or suggest the presently pending claims. The applicant's earlier patent specification WO 98/50219 (PCT/AU98/00314) schematically discloses a structure that is somewhat similar to the structure in the present specification for stretching and relaxing plastics film; however, in the earlier case, there is no specific disclosure of the idler nip rollers 6 in the film stretching zone 11 being forced against the primary rolls 3, 4 with sufficient force to prevent the film necking down when stretched. In fact, the earlier specification suggests the opposite in that the edge zones of the stretched film are said to be thicker than central zones, requiring these thicker edge zones to be removed to enable the film to be wound up onto a roll. Clearly the film properties are not uniform across a transverse dimension of the film web in the applicant's earlier case. Regardless, the earlier case clearly does not refer to biaxial stretching of the film web. Although the applicant does not intend for the claims to be limited as a result of mentioning the following theory, it may be helpful to mention that the applicant believes biaxial stretching affects the crystalline structure of the plastics material (e.g., film) to create a herringbone or cross-linked crystalline structure that provides the improved resistance to UV degradation and the increased

resistance to gas permeability. The applicant notes, without conceding, that it might be anticipated that straight longitudinal stretching would align the crystalline structure in the longitudinal direction. In contrast, the biaxially stretching affects the crystalline structure providing the aforementioned (and currently claimed) capabilities as well as a noticeably increased resistance to tearing in the longitudinal direction. This latter feature was noticed after the current specification was prepared but it is indicative in the applicant's view of the change in crystalline structure achieved by biaxial stretching.

With regard to claims 31 and 35, it is respectfully submitted that none of the prior art documents teach or suggest the feature of secondary stretching, and it is a surprising result that secondary stretching with or without further relaxing does not alter the structure of the film to vary its capacity of resisting UV degradation and increasing resistance to gas permeability.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that each of the independent claims is allowable. It is further respectfully submitted that the dependent claims are allowable due to their respective dependence from the allowable independent claims, and because the dependent claims further patentably distinguish the present invention.

Respectfully submitted,

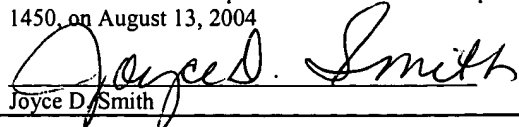


James A. Witherspoon
Registration No. 36,723

Customer No. 00826
ALSTON & BIRD LLP
Bank of America Plaza
101 South Tryon Street, Suite 4000
Charlotte, NC 28280-4000
Tel Charlotte Office (704) 444-1000
Fax Charlotte Office (704) 444-1111
#4662157v1

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Joyce D. Smith